

THE CLIMATE SHIFTS ON IMMIGRATION

Common Sense to the Fore on the Admission of DP's

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EUROPE'S DP's are not a drug on the market. Congress is just awakening to this fact. The spur to this awakening has been the realization that other nations are skimming off the cream of skilled manpower from the camps — while the United States has its hands tied with restrictive immigration legislation. With this awakening has come a favorable change in the climate of opinion with regard to immigration and DP's. Facts and reason have come to the fore, and it looks as if a new kind of realism will guide the discussion.

The State Department has been telling these facts to Congress for months. But it took the overseas tours of the various Congressional committees to drive the point home. Britain, they found, is drawing off 1200 workers a week into her mines, factories, and farms, and no limit has yet been set on the total that may be admitted. Belgium has brought in 20,000 miners, along with their families. Holland is absorbing 8,000 industrial workers. Canada is in the market for 5,000 lumbermen, and in addition is taking in 2,000 single women as domestics. Other countries are showing a similar interest in this hitherto neglected res-

THE last session of Congress ended with emergency legislation to admit DP's still in congressional committee. Now those who advocate joining with other countries to give DP's a final haven, are closing ranks to bring the matter to a favorable result. As a member of the Washington Bureau of the *Christian Science Monitor*, JOSEPHINE RIPLEY has had an opportunity to observe at first hand the political atmosphere surrounding the battle over immigration legislation, and she here appraises the chances for its successful passage. Miss Ripley was educated in New England. She has published articles in *Tomorrow* and the *New Yorker*, and has also written for the radio.

ervoir of manpower. The House Foreign Affairs subcommittee on DP's, in its report of November 15, after it returned from a survey of the European camps, warned:

"The United States is losing the opportunity to obtain much needed immigrant material by delaying enactment of a special immigration statute for resettlement of displaced persons. A lack of imagination or a heritage of old preconceptions . . . should not be allowed to blind the nation. . . ."

IT is not only Congressmen who are becoming alert to what the DP's have to offer. Communities, taking stock of their postwar situation, are showing an even greater interest in the 95,000 farmhands, 30,000 domestic workers, 21,000 construction and maintenance workers, the thousands of doctors, surgeons, dentists, and nurses among the 300,000 employable DP's. A committee appointed by Republican Governor Fred G. Aandahl of North Dakota is studying the proposal that many thousands of homeless refugees be admitted to that state alone. Since 1940, the population of North Dakota has dropped almost 100,000; during the war farmhands and agricultural workers emigrated to the greener pastures of the big cities. A single club in North Dakota, organized by a Catholic priest to back the admission of DP's, has more than 10,000 members. Idaho, Montana, and other states which in the past seven years have seen their population decline sharply are experiencing similar emotions. Alaska, too, with a population of 133,000, one-third of whom are Indians and Eskimos in remote villages, needs immigrants. During the war, it is pointed out, the government was forced to organize Eskimos into guerrilla units in order to set up a pretense of coastal defense.

The Minnesota Committee on Displaced Persons, appointed by Governor Youngdahl, has been the first to take steps of a practical nature. It began a survey at the beginning of December to determine how many displaced persons could be "happily and prosperously resettled" in Minnesota. This survey is being conducted through ministers and priests, who go directly to the public for the necessary detailed information.

UNDER present immigration laws it is utterly impossible to move any substantial number of these DP's into the United States.

When, in 1929, the "national origins" plan came to be law, the annual quota for each European country was set at that fraction of 150,000 that the persons originating in the country in question bore to the total American population in 1920. The "racist" intention of the act was clearly delineated at the time: it was not only to restrict immigration in general, but specifically to restrict immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe. The Northern European countries under this law get 82 per cent of the total immigration quota. But since the inhabitants of these countries are usually reluctant to emigrate, their average quota fulfillment for the past decade has only been 13.7 per cent; the rest of the quota goes to waste.

As it happens, about 200,000 DP's are natives of Latvia, Lithuania, Yugoslavia, and Estonia. The combined annual quota of these countries is 1,583. The immigration law also specifies that quotas cannot be transferred from one country to another, or from one year to another. Any unused portion of an annual quota is simply written off the books. A further restriction is that not more than 10 per cent of the annual quota for any country can be used in one month.

Just how crippling all these restrictions are is seen in what happened to President Truman's directive of December 22, 1945, which authorized the filling of unused Central European quotas in order to admit 39,000 DP's during 1946. This directive ignored the one important fact: the German quota made up 26,000 of the total available. It

also overlooked the influence of the shipping shortage joined with that provision of the immigration law that set a monthly limit of 10 per cent of the total. The net result was that less than 5,000 DP's were able to gain admittance in 1946.

Legislation to open the way for admission of 400,000 DP's over a period of four years was placed before Congress last April by Representative William G. Stratton, Republican, of Illinois, and public hearings were held on it. The Stratton Bill proposes no change whatsoever in the basic immigration law or established quotas. The 400,000 DP's it would admit represent the total of unused quotas during the war years, when only 7 per cent of the number of immigrants permitted under law were able to enter. Another bill, introduced by Congressman Chelf, proposes to bring in 100,000 DP's during the period of a year; it likewise suggests no amendment to the immigration laws, but makes allowance for admission on a "non-quota" basis. The Ferguson bill in the Senate provides for admission of an unspecified number—the exact figure to be determined later—on a "non-quota" basis. All of these bills call for screening of DP's by the military, the State Department, and the immigration authorities.

While gathering sentiment behind the Stratton Bill suffered some loss of momentum when the adjournment of Congress last session left it bottled up in a House subcommittee, it is felt that this will be more than compensated for by the favorable reactions of touring Congressmen, and the continued pressure of its supporters. By the time the Bill comes up, in the forthcoming regular session, it is hoped that the snowball of Congressional opinion will be rolling—in the right direction.

CERTAINLY, the sponsors and supporters of the bill, led by the Citizens Committee on Displaced Persons, make an impressive body. Among the organizations pressing for its enactment are: AFL and CIO, the National Catholic Welfare Conference, Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America,

American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Conference, and many others. The support of the AFL was especially welcome, since that organization has been traditionally active in urging restrictive immigration practices. This time it was people who are usually not too friendly toward labor who raised the venerable cry of "the danger of foreign workers competing with Americans for American jobs." To them, William Green, president of the AFL, explained that of the 100,000 immigrants in any one year, not more than 60,000 would be potential job-hunters; compared with the total labor force of 60,000,000, they would amount to about one-tenth of one per cent—scarcely a threat.

Even more significant was the reversal of its position by the American Legion. The Legion, always touchy upon the subject of immigration as a possible threat to "pure" Americanism, at first announced its opposition. In short order, however, it found itself ideologically disarmed and politically isolated. It argued that immigrants would take away jobs from American workers—and was informed by the CIO, AFL, and Department of Labor that the claim was unfounded. Its officials charged publicly that "thousands of foreigners are streaming over the United States borders every day" and it was informed by the Commissioner of Immigration that it was only about 800 per cent wrong! The Legion also asserted that 154,000 immigrants enter the United States each year under the quota system, and that this was quite sufficient. It learned that, in making this estimate, it had carelessly assumed that all of the 153,929 immigrants who may enter legally each year do so; in fact, the annual average of quota immigrants for the past ten years is 29,463. The absurdity of the accusation that these immigrants might be "subversive" or "Communist" became evident almost in the uttering: these people are homeless exactly because they refuse to return to Soviet-dominated territories. Moreover, 80 per cent of the DP's are Catholic, and the Catholic hierarchy in this country took pains to point this out to the Legion.

Politically, the Legion found itself in di-

rect opposition to the attitude of top brass and braid—among these the Secretary of State and former Chief of Staff, the Secretary of War, and the President himself, all noted members and alumni with whom the Legion likes to be pleasantly associated.

As a result, Legion policy was amended in October. It extricated itself from its embarrassment by drawing a distinction between the Legion's general stand against immigration, and its position on immigration of DP's. It went on record as favoring admittance of "limited numbers" as "an emergency matter involving humanitarian considerations," while insisting that this "in no way affects the Legion's traditional policy of restricting all normal quota immigration." More recently past National Commander Paul Griffiths toured DP camps in Europe and returned to praise the nobility of their inmates.

THE State Department has an especially keen interest in the passage of such legislation, and it has done everything within its power to promote Congressional action. It has reminded Congress again and again that there are only four alternative courses.

The first is to forcibly repatriate the DP's. This would mean driving them back to their native lands at the point of a bayonet. These lands are now under Communist domination. Most of the DP's share the sentiment of the Yugoslav who exclaimed: "Should I go home to a political regime I hate and fear, to be tried by Tito who accuses me of being a collaborator during the time I was in German prison camps? The only one with whom I could have collaborated was God!"

The second alternative is to keep the DP's indefinitely in camps in the occupied areas, under the care of the International Refugee Organization. The consequences of this would be the moral and physical deterioration of some 850,000 people—innocent victims of the war—as well as a continuing expense to the American taxpayer.

The third possibility is to let them fend for themselves in the German economy. This prospect is enough to give military

authorities fits and shivers. Friction between DP's and Germans is already intense. The Germans, bitter over their privation, perversely blame the DP's. These latter, for their own part, have little reason to feel kindly toward the Germans. To turn the camp population out into the already overcrowded German economy would be an incitement to riots and vagabondage, and would make the job of the occupation troops infinitely more troublesome.

The fourth alternative, and the one recommended, is resettlement in friendly countries, including the United States. This would enable these people to become self-supporting and self-reliant. It is the only alternative that could be a permanent, as well as a humane, solution.

REASONS of immediate need and long-term national interest should have combined to make American business regard the Stratton Bill with a benevolent eye. The shortage of labor in many trades is conspicuous: the garment industry in New York alone is in need of some 20,000 apprentices. Furthermore, businessmen who are traditionally worried about government spending, are aware that it costs \$300 to maintain a DP in Europe for one year—and that it would cost \$200 to bring him to the United States, find him a job, and settle him down. As *Fortune* remarked in its editorial for August 1947: "From the point of view of the employer—agricultural and industrial—the Stratton Bill is just horse sense."

Surveying the situation from the vantage point of historical perspective, *Fortune* saw in the hysterical trend toward a freezing of immigration a capitulation and a menace. In the October 1947 issue, Herrymon Maurer, in an article on "The Right to Move," flashed a danger signal: "The world inclines no longer to the *laissez-aller* of nineteenth-century America . . . but to the autarchic controls of twentieth century Russia. . . . The change from the free migration of the last century to the controls of the present is part of a change from free trade to quotas, from free business to state enterprise, from a meas-

ure of personal freedom to an overdose of state control."

Unfortunately, it did not seem that *Fortune's* point of view was shared by a majority of American industry. Traditionally, capital—as against labor—had always favored immigration as a source of cheap labor. But since 1933, American bankers and industrialists had conducted a fierce campaign to convince the American people that the New Deal was a "foreign" development. Whatever other effects this may have had, it resulted in business talking itself into a state of xenophobia; every time it looks abroad, it sees a threat. Consequently, neither the NAM nor the Chamber of Commerce has shown much enthusiasm for the proposed legislation.

MEMBERS of Congress of both parties have showed themselves receptive to the growing movement for emergency legislation to admit DP's. When one considers the powerful and broad-ranging organizational support for such a measure, it is not surprising that its advocates receive a friendly hearing. Congressman Stratton (Republican), whose measure is the only one on which hearings have been held so far, is normally regarded as a "party" man. So is Senator Homer Ferguson of Michigan, who introduced a similar bill in the Senate. Joining with the Michigan Senator in sponsoring the legislation are six leading Republicans—Joseph H. Ball of Minnesota, H. Alexander Smith of New Jersey, John S. Cooper of Kentucky, and Leverett Saltonstall of Massachusetts—and two Democrats, J. Howard McGrath of Rhode Island, chairman of the Democratic National Committee, and Carl Hatch of New Mexico.

The Republican policy leader, Senator Taft, has been somewhat equivocal and shifting in his position, though recently the shift seems to have been in a positive direction. Last spring, when asked to act as Senatorial sponsor of the measure, he was quoted as declining because "I have too many fights on my hands already." Shortly afterwards, a correspondent from the *Jewish Daily Forward* quoted the Ohio Senator as saying that

he would not only vote for the Stratton Bill, but would speak to party members on its behalf. The hopes that this gave rise to were quickly dashed when, on his Western tour, he told a press conference: "I have not absolutely opposed any admission of displaced persons, but I think it should be carefully limited. . . ." His most recent pronouncement, on December 1, 1947, was that "I believe that the United States should assume its share of displaced persons remaining in Europe and admit them into this country if the total number does not exceed the total deficiency in legal quotas. I believe the condition calls for immediate action." For a lawyer, the phrasing was surprisingly vague; but for a statesman the call to action was heart-warmingly blunt. Another prospect for the Republican presidential nomination, Senator Vandenberg of Michigan, while never having committed himself on the issue, is counted on to vote "yes." He led the campaign for American membership in the International Refugee Organization, and is expected to follow through when it comes to the domestic legislation needed to implement that membership. The usually cautious Governor Dewey apparently saw no advantage in hedging, and has come out forthrightly in support.

WHO then is the opposition? It is a strange array—including individual Congressmen like Ed Gossett, Democrat, of Texas, and organizations like the Daughters of the American Revolution—and the Communist party. The arguments they employ are an equally strange amalgam.

Thus, Representative Gossett charged that the DP camps are loaded with Russian spies and agents seeking to gain admission to this country at about the same time that the *Daily Worker* was crying that the Stratton Bill "is so worded as to exclude the anti-fascists and open the gates to hundreds of thousands who may have left their native lands to collaborate or work with the Axis powers." If Representative Gossett was blind to the fact that the overwhelming majority of the DP's were anti-Communists, the Communists were evidently not. On the other

hand, the *Daily Worker* showed itself as eager to gloss over the fact that these DP's were forcibly conscripted by the Nazis as slave labor, as Representative Gossett was to gloss over the fact that the reason these persons were DP's was because they refused to return to Russian-dominated lands.

The arguments employed against the bill—by all parties—were scarcely worthy of refutation. The Communists charged that "former *Volksdeutsche* and other members of the Nazi armies, . . . will have priority for immigration to the United States"—an outright fabrication. Representative Gossett and the DAR all used the hoary argument that "foreigners" took away jobs from "real Americans." It was an argument that had been widely used during the depression of the 30's, despite the fact that between 1929 and 1935 the excess of emigrants over immigrants was 65,000. Indeed, these opponents of the measure seemed, on this occasion, to subscribe to the belief in a "mature" and "static" American economy with only a limited number of opportunities—a belief that they had elsewhere denounced as "subversive" and "un-American." They also made a great to-do about the housing shortage (about which in the past they had refused to consider any constructive legislation); what they resolutely failed to consider was that among the DP's were many skilled building-trades workers, who would more than compensate for the small increase in population needing housing due to immigration.

Actually, the "100 per cent American" supporters of harshly restrictive immigration laws have a rather checkered career upon the subject, to which their recent statements have not done justice. For instance, during the war many of them went out of their way to ask the State Department to make special arrangements to let in a large number of Mexicans to work in the fields of the South and Southwest. Many of these Mexicans have remained illegally in this country at the request of their employers. It is well known that some of the important constituents of Representative Gossett have pressed him to see that the immigration service did not too

strictly enforce the immigration laws. And the immigration service has admitted that, because of the shortage of farm labor, it has been in no hurry to act up to the hilt of the law.

There was a visible edge of anti-Semitism in many of the passionate declarations against admitting immigrants. The fact that, of the 850,000 DP's, 550,000 were Catholic, 100,000 were Protestant, and 200,000 were Jews appeared not to matter at all. Nor did the fact that some 150,000 of the Jews were intent on getting to Palestine, and would not go elsewhere, make any difference. It was but another illustration that anti-Semitic prejudice is immune to matters of fact and even, at times, to matters of self-interest.

YET despite the relative smallness of the opposition to the Stratton Bill, and despite the incoherence of its platform, there is no doubt that this opposition has some measure of popular appeal. The explanation for this lies deep in American history—and equally deep in human nature, apparently. It is xenophobia, "the fear of strangers," an only too well-known human characteristic that has been exacerbated by the intense nationalism of recent times. There were complaints in 1647 because eighteen different languages were spoken in New Amsterdam, and in 1797, Representative Harrison G. Otis said in Congress: "It might have been all right to admit foreigners when the country was new, but it is no longer so." It is an old phenomenon of American history, this transformation of the despised alien into the "100 per cent pure" American who has only contempt for "foreigners." When Representative Fisher, of Texas (and a member of the House Immigration Committee) referred to the DP's as "dregs and riff-raff of Eastern Europe," he was in the tradition of the Know-Nothing movement of the 1850's, the American Protective Association of the late 1880's, and the Klu Klux Klan of our own day.

The experience of the anti-Nazi immigrants of the 30's indicates how tenacious this suspicion of foreigners can be. During

that period there was a whispering campaign to the effect that German refugees were replacing native-born Americans in New York department stores, and that housewives had to carry along German dictionaries when shopping! The whispering campaign reached such an intensity that the largest stores were forced to refute it publicly. The department stores, it should be noted, courageously took the opportunity to state that "we share the deep and natural public sympathy for the plight of any refugee from any form of oppression and persecution."

The same rumor was popular in Pittsburgh. A committee of leading citizens investigated and found that of approximately 8,000 full-time employees in these stores, not one was a refugee!

In ordinary times, perhaps, this might be passed off as a deplorable human weakness, possibly with the remark that "there's a sucker born every minute." But when so high-placed a statesman as Senator Elmer Thomas admits that if the inscription on the Statue of Liberty were to be written today, he would have it reworded, it is a hint that a basic American ideal runs the risk of being subverted. At this juncture in our history, when democracy is being hard pressed by totalitarian ideologies, we can hardly afford to show ourselves so weak in our faith. An editorial in *Life* a little more than a year ago pointed out reprovingly: "There was a day when American sympathies would go out to all such people. Indeed, for a brief period (1917-21) our immigration laws paid them specific honor by exempting from all restrictions all victims of religious or political persecution." Perhaps, the editorial went on to speculate, "Americans just don't like the tired, the poor, and the huddled masses that the Statue of Liberty beckons."

If that turns out to be the case the greatest democracy in the world will have revealed itself to be constructed on some extremely shaky reeds. At the present time, fortunately, there is reasonable ground for belief that this revelation will remain only an unpleasant possibility.